

Criteria for Use of Privately Owned Vehicles

1. This paper deals with the problem of providing guidelines in applying travel regulations where approval for use of a privately owned vehicle (POV) for official travel is permissible and where the question of what constitutes advantage to the Government is the specific point of issue. No recommendations for adoption of a particular set of rules or fixed formulae are contained, but criteria are presented in an attempt to arrive at a rationale which could serve as the basis for adoption of more specific guidelines. The following premises are assumed:

- a. The employee's scheduled reporting date at his next duty station permits time to travel by POV.
- b. The vehicle is not needed for operational reasons during the trip or at the TDY post if such travel is for TDY.
- c. Cost is not the sole criteria for determining what constitutes advantage to the Government.

The Standardized Government Travel Regulations, concerning payment on a mileage basis, state in part, in paragraph 3.5b(1): ". . . It is the responsibility of proper officials of the departments and establishments to fix such rates, within the maxima, as will most nearly compensate the traveler for necessary expenses. In determining whether such transportation is more advantageous to the Government, consideration will be given to the advantages resulting from the more expeditious transaction of the public business as well as other advantages and/or disadvantages to the United States in the particular case."

2. We are concerned here with the particular phrase "other advantages" and whether guidelines concerning these can be established which are based on reasons sufficiently compelling to over-ride the additional cost of travel by POV where such is authorized at 12¢ per mile and \$16.00 per diem, and where payment is not limited to cost by common carrier. The attached cost comparison study does not, in and of itself, provide a ready made answer but only indicates the relative costs for a cross country domestic trip.

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3. Agency policy concerning use of vehicles at Field Stations and [redacted] as well pursues the objective that the employee use, wherever possible, his personally owned vehicle for official business, receiving reimbursement for such use. This then makes it highly desirable, but not necessarily mandatory, that he take his car with him and use it for official as well as private business. The merit of this policy needs no justification here but relates to the problem at hand in that the employee usually takes his car and brings it back. Whether it is the same one or not is immaterial. He may have sold the car at the post and ordered a replacement for delivery upon his return to the United States. If, for example, he is proceeding to a Far East post and reporting time permits, he may as well drive across the country and derive certain benefits from this means of travel. Among these, he and his family will see this country at first-hand. This factor is intangible when an attempt is made to set a monetary value on it, but his knowledge of the United States will be enhanced and such will be useful directly to him and indirectly to the Government in his dealings with nationals of other countries in social as well as official situations. In other words, he is broadened by the experience, obtains by a direct method a greater comprehension of his own country, and should consequently be a better representative of such. Should he be assigned to an Eastern European or Middle Eastern post, travel by car through Europe would provide first-hand experience of value in orienting him to living and adjusting to foreign cultures and modes of life. Particularly, if he is relatively young and untraveled, this mode supplements in a practical way what classroom or formal training and briefing began.

4. The returnee, on the other hand, particularly the one who has been overseas in a hardship area or at an isolated post for considerable time, may need reorientation to the United States. He may have had consecutive tours in such areas without more than a minimum of home leave between assignments. In the past, he may have been required to fly out and back as time did not permit the more time consuming mode of travel by car. Readjusting to his home country environment and changed conditions since his departure is now a desirable objective as it is time to re-acquaint him with living in the United States. In many situations, desire to take home leave and visit relatives while en route enters into the case and, as a morale factor, should not be discounted. Family problems, which arose during his absence, often need his personal attention. These are best attended to while on home leave. Having his own personal transportation with him facilitates conduct of his own business and he can often return to duty sooner with a consequent improvement in job outlook knowing that these matters have been attended to.

5. In other cases, state of health of employee or dependent makes it unwise to travel the full distance by air. This additional factor is existent in some cases and is of assistance in determining action. Some theoretical savings in cost may be realized depending on the route, if the car is to be driven rather than shipped. This factor enters into the cost comparison as an offset in comparing relative costs by various modes.

6. While not all of the above factors applied to all cases in the past, those which did apply, or which are reasonably conceived to have been used, were so used as the basis for arriving at the conclusion that advantage to the Government accrued. In other words, it was more advantageous to the Government to authorize use of the POV without limit to constructive cost as the additional cost by this mode was outweighed by these other considerations. If they were acceptable in the past as sound criteria, they should apply equally as well to future cases and precedent has been established for future use.

Attachment  
Comparative Cost Study